

Message Text

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44

ACTION AF-18

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 RSC-01 SCI-06 PA-04 USIA-15

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R 201200Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5874

INFO NASA HEADQUARTERS WASHDC

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 1790

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TSPA, MA, US

SUBJ: NASA TRACKING STATION; FOREIGN MINISTER'S SPEECH TO
PEOPLE'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

REF: TANANARIVE 1760 (NOTAL)

OUAGADOUGOU FOR ASS'T SECRETARY DESIGNATE EASUM

BEGIN SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER RATSIRAKA HAS RECENTLY EXPLAINED
TO NEW CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY HIS REASONS FOR BELIEVING IT IS IN
MADAGASCAR'S INTEREST TO KEEP NASA TRACKING STATION. HE DID,
HOWEVER, EMPHASIZE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT'S POSITION THAT RENT IS
OWED BY UNITED STATES FOR USE OF LAND SINCE AND IN ACCORDANCE
WITH 1963 BILATERAL AGREEMENT. MATTER MUST BE RESOLVED PRIOR TO
ENTERING INTO NEW AGREEMENT, HE SAID. EMBASSY BELIEVES STATEMENT
AUGURS WELL FOR NEW STATION AGREEMENT PROVIDED US AND MADAGASCAR
CAN SETTLE ISSUE OF HOW MUCH RENT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE. FOREIGN
MINISTER'S PRESENCE WILL PROBABLY STIFFEN GOMR RESOLUTION TO
DEMAND HIGH RENT. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER DIDIER RATSIRAKA'S COMMENTS ABOUT NASA
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TRACKING STATION IN MADAGASCAR, FOLLOWING HIS REVIEW OF MAJOR

FOREIGN POLICY DEVELOPMENTS, CONSUMED SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF TIME DEVOTED TO ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM FLOOR OF PEOPLE'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (NEW CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY). QUESTION ABOUT FUTURE OF NASA AND RADIO NEDERLAND RELAY STATION RAISED IN UNCONTENTIOUS MANNER BY ASSEMBLYMAN ANDRIANAMANJATO WHO IS MAYOR OF TANANARIVE, NOTORIOUSLY PRO-SOVIET AND LONG-TIME CRITIC OF ALL FOREIGN "BASES" IN MADAGASCAR. FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS MADE BY FOREIGN MINISTER WERE REPORTED BY PRESS AND EMBASSY LOCAL WHO LISTENED TO LIVE BROADCAST:

A. MADAGASCAR STATION DEVOTED SOLELY TO TRACKING CIVILIAN SCIENTIFIC SATELLITES. US HAS MILITARY SATELLITE TRACKING STATION AT DIEGO GARCIA. WHETHER IT HAS NASA STATION IN MADAGASCAR OR NOT, MILITARY ESPIONAGE WILL CONTINUE. NASA IS ALLOWING MALAGASY GOVERNMENT CIVILIANS AND MILITARY SPECIALISTS COMPLETE FREEDOM TO VISIT LOCAL STATION AND VERIFY ESPIONAGE NOT BEING CARRIED ON.

B. STATION EMPLOYS OVER 100 MALAGASY TECHNICIANS WHO WOULD BE HARD TO PLACE IF STATION CLOSED.

C. STATION PERSONNEL WILL BE COMPLETELY MALAGASIZED WITHIN THREE YEARS. NASA HAS PROPOSED CONTRACTING WITH MALAGASY POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS FOR EVENTUAL REPLACEMENT OF BENDIX.

D. PICTURES, SENT TO FOREIGN MINISTER BY NASA OR PICKED UP IN US WHILE ON OFFICIAL VISIT AND DISPLAYED TO ASSEMBLY, SHOW THAT GOMR CAN DRAW ON NASA FOR SCIENTIFIC DATA CONCERNING MINERAL DEPOSITS AND OTHER GEOLOGICAL FEATURES. UNDP CAN TRAIN MALAGASY TO INTERPRET PHOTOGRAPHS AND GOMR CAN ASK US TO FURNISH ALL THE PHOTOS IT WANTS.

E. THEREFORE, WOULDN'T MADAGASCAR LOSE BY DEPARTURE NASA TRACKING STATION?

F. HOWEVER, 1963 AGREEMENT PROVIDES FOR RENT AND MADAGASCAR HAS NOT RECEIVED ONE CENT TO DATE. THIS IS SUBJECT OF CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS WHICH MUST BE RESOLVED BEFORE NEW AGREEMENT SIGNED.

G. IN LAST ANALYSIS, IT IS NOT HE BUT MALAGASY GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE WHO MUST DECIDE WHETHER STATION STAYS OR GOES.

H. RADIO NEDERLAND QUESTION BEING STUDIED.

2. ALTHOUGH CONTINUATION OF NEGOTIATIONS WERE RECENTLY TWICE POSTPONED AT MALAGASY INITIATIVE FOR VALID TECHNICAL REASONS, EMBASSY BELIEVES MALAGASY NEGOTIATING TEAM ALSO WANTED TO REPORT TO FOREIGN MINISTER (WHO RETURNED ONLY DEC 17 FROM TWO- MONTH CONFIDENTIAL

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LONG TRIP TO NEW YORK, EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA) ON US PROPOSALS (SYMBOLIC RENT FOR FIRST NINE YEARS, REASONABLE RENT FOR CURRENT CALENDAR YEAR AND FUTURE YEARS BASED ON ALTERNATIVE LAND USE) BEFORE PROCEEDING. ALTHOUGH FOREIGN MINISTER MAY ACCEPT US PROPOSAL IN PRINCIPLE, HIS PRESENCE HERE IS BOUND TO STIFFEN GOMR'S RENTAL DEMANDS.

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